

(Mrs. BLACKBURN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to go out of order to give my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

#### ADDRESSING THE NATION'S HEALTH CARE PROBLEMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, according to a poll taken just this month in June 2003 by the Winston Group, nearly 50 percent of Americans believe that the uninsured and the high cost of health insurance are one of the biggest problems facing our country today. With skyrocketing health costs and a recent Census Bureau figure showing that 41.2 million Americans lack health insurance coverage, this information does not come as a surprise.

There are, Mr. Speaker, some free market and tax incentive initiatives that could increase health care coverage for a significant segment of the population, making this health care more available and less expensive. I am confident that there is legislation that has been introduced, and indeed the House passed overwhelmingly just a few hours ago, H.R. 660, that will address some of the root causes of these serious problems.

There is a bill, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1236, the Securing Access, Value, and Equality Health Care Act, that seeks to end the tax discrimination that makes it difficult for low-income families and individuals to purchase non-employer provided health insurance. H.R. 1236 does away with this discrimination by making prepayable, refundable tax credits available to all Americans for the purchase of health insurance regardless of their employer or their employment status.

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Under this bill, an individual could claim up to a \$1,000 tax credit, \$2,000 per married couple, and \$500 per child to a maximum of \$3,000 per family. By giving low-income individuals and families the purchasing power to meet their health insurance needs, the number of Americans without health insurance could be dramatically reduced.

Another bill, H.R. 2114, a bill that I introduced, a bill that enjoys bipartisan support, the Health Access and Flexibility Act, would increase access to medical savings accounts to all Americans and grant States the flexibility to provide Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program recipients health care coverage under a

medical savings account model. The bill removes the cap on medical savings accounts and allows MSA holders to fully fund their accounts.

Additionally, the bill would give States the ability to create medical savings-like accounts for Medicaid or CHIP recipients, and we have called these Medical Freedom Accounts.

By providing Americans with incentives to hold down medical spending through an MSA and giving them more flexibility on how to spend their own money on medical costs, the cost of health care can be contained and individuals will be able to achieve a higher quality of health outcomes.

And, Mr. Speaker, just today just a few hours ago, H.R. 660 passed this House, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2003, which allowed the establishment of association health plans. This bill allows businesses to pool their employees with other businesses that are part of the bona fide trade or business association to purchase employer-based health insurance. This gives small businesses this option, and this will be a powerful tool that will drive down the cost of employer-based health insurance making health insurance more affordable for small businesses and coverage more available to employees. With the passage of this bill, Mr. Speaker, we are one step closer to providing much needed relief to the uninsured.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to address the increasing cost of health insurance and the decreasing access to health insurance; but, Mr. Speaker it is my hope that this House can continue to work to improve the health and well-being of all Americans by taking up these last two measures and provide a robust solution to our Nation's health care problems.

#### PRAISING AND CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before I begin my tribute, as a Texan, I would like to join with my good friend from San Antonio and around the State of Texas to be able to congratulate those fantastic San Antonio Spurs. As the Members well know, coming from Houston there is absolutely one basketball team that we all believe is number one, the Houston Rockets. But as Texans, we always rally around our friends and neighbors, and so I am delighted to congratulate the San Antonio Spurs. I am glad I did not make any wrong bets and to particularly appreciate David Robinson for his years of the kind of playing with integrity and character that we can all be proud of, the David Robinson School in San Antonio that he committed to with his own resources, the

spirit that he generated for that team, the outstanding work of most valuable player, Tim Duncan, and as well the fact that Steve Kerr came from the wonderful State of Illinois, but we have got him now, came off the bench and propelled the San Antonio Spurs to where they are today. My hat is off and I look forward to working with him and the team as we work to make Texas and the Nation a better place.

Today, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is a very good day and I have the honor of commemorating this day. It is Juneteenth, and we look forward to Juneteenth becoming a national holiday of commemoration to the extent that all of America is aware of the importance of this celebration. It is, in fact, June 19, today, that we are able to stand to pay tribute but also to solemnly acknowledge the importance of this day. I am very proud to have been able to join many of my colleagues, including the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY), and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN), and many others as we stood in the Mansfield Room in the United States Senate, the other body, paying tribute to this important day as well as being with Dr. Myers and others who believe that this is a historic time.

What is Juneteenth? Juneteenth is a statement of freedom. Juneteenth is the unshackling of a body of people. Juneteenth is the freeing of slaves in the State of Texas. Juneteenth is the renewing of one's character, integrity, spirit, and ability to achieve one's greatest opportunities. It was Juneteenth or June 19, 1865, some 2 long hard years after the Emancipation Proclamation, that the people of Texas, the slaves of Texas, I might say, were able to realize their freedom. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19 that the Union soldiers led by the courageous Major General Gordon Granger landed in Galveston, Texas, with the news that the Civil War ended and that the slaves were now freed, the end slaves were freed. The Emancipation Proclamation became official, however, on January 1, 1863. Nevertheless, aside from that sad fact the people were already in a state of bondage, they did not get the word because there were not enough Union soldiers there to enforce.

So, Mr. Speaker, we heard these words when Major Granger landed on that Galveston shore and freed or removed the bondage from those who were seeking to empower themselves, and he said, "The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer." What important words for today, Mr. Speaker.